

An Essay
on
Rational Medicine

Respectfully submitted
to the faculty of the
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of Pennsylvania

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Rational Medicine

In taking up this subject, as the theme of our essay, we are conscious of our inability to write anything that will have the impress of originality. Everything perhaps that we will write has been written again and again by others, but, when we hear such honorable and reverential expressions, as Regular, Rational, and very many others applied to the Practice of Medicine, we very naturally wish to understand their import and their truthfulness.

Many have doubtless been misled by a high-sounding title or awed by a great name but we will endeavor to examine both ere we are either betrayed into error or subdued into bondage.

Rational signifies according to reason or reasonable, and Medicine, in this connection, the use of remedies; both taken together the meaning is. The best and wisest way of preparing, and most proper mode of administering medicines. Taking this definition

then as an exposition of the term, we will take into consideration the claims of the different schools to the title, and what seems to us to be a system worthy of so honorable an appellation.

We have no certain knowledge of the first appearance of disease in our world; all that we know is, that death has been the common lot of man; but whether it has been generally preceded by disease throughout his whole history, we are not credibly informed. No doubt diseases have been prevalent from a very early period. and the history of medicine were it all written would date back nearly if not quite as far, so we have had diseases and modes of treating those diseases for a long time.

Now man's boasted reason obviously could never teach him the Medicinal properties of drugs, or any of their effects upon the structure, or functions, of the human organism. This knowledge has been always obtained by experience and only by experience. Now

experience is founded, either upon accident, or upon experiment. Upon these must rest the whole superstructure of whatever system exists in medicine; and while we examine into the knowledge they afford us we will also look into the merits of that knowledge or in other words which is most likely to afford us unmixed and uncontaminated Truth.

Accidents happen or may occur at all times and in all places. We may or may not have an opportunity of being present when they occur; and if we are present, our minds may not be in proper train, to take cognisance of all the facts developed. A thousand circumstances may be overlooked, which have an important bearing upon the case, and which would perhaps change the whole state of affairs. They are isolated. Here and there. These and many more objections lead us to doubt the experience obtained from an accident. But if this ^{one} support of all Medical knowledge is so weak so precarious how far from

being well founded and trustworthy must be a system founded almost if not solely upon such a base. It certainly can have but slight claims to be considered a rational system, and certainly nothing but egotism could suggest the claim of being the only regular, and rational school. But is there anything that resembles the above picture? Is there a prototype? We might ask with one exception is there anything else to be found but examples of such systems, even if we may so far prostitute the term system as to confer it upon such collections of asserted facts and ~~crave~~ theories. Hundreds of systems have been heralded to the world that never had a single careful experiment instituted to test their reality. Theories of disease in general have arisen from the brain of the cloistered and impractical Philosopher and have been born of the intellect of the practical but unlearned agriculturist. Every one of the host of discoverers have laid claim to the title of Rational

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and applied it to his system and to none
else, but experiment, the touch stone of
discoveries in science has dissipated the
hopes of the world and consigned the new
wreck to the tomb of Oblivion

That system of Practice which ~~now~~ holds
sway at present and whose members are
so very anxious to be considered the only
regular practitioners of the healing art
claims our first attention when we
attempt to go into detail. Now in what
does its ~~merits~~ consist. It claims in the
first place to have the sanction of centuries,
the authority of age. But does wisdom fol-
low age? are we to look for sound doctrines
and right views in scientific matters among
the musty records of the past, and bow to
the dictates of antiquity in Medicine when
in every other branch of Human knowledge
we discard the doctrines of the past? Certainly
not! When did a new truth appear that

did not have to contend with hoary error. Was the discoverer of the circulation the great Harvey who broke through the darkness of the vascular system and demonstrated that blood and not air flowed through what was and is still called arteries; was he honored? Did not the same cry arise from the dull followers of the errors of former ages as we still hear urged against the advancement made in our own times? Need we cite the case of the immortal Jenner who came with a weapon more potent than disease and which has been able to ward off the deadliest instrument ever used by the grim Tyrant? He was looked upon as an impostor by the Medical Profession and as a heretic by the blind and bigoted minister of the prevailing religion. But posterity honors him and the discovery he made is looked upon as the priceless gift of the Creator to his fallen yet ever pitied creatures. And

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so of every other great discovery or valuable
invention in the healing art. At first de-
cried and its author persecuted then exam-
ined and adopted and the discoverer or
inventor looked up to with gratitude.

So we see that this claim is worth just
nothing even if we look no further. But
let us examine a little more minutely, this
self-styled regular system. Is it in reality of
ancient origin? Did Hippocrates that great
Father of Medicine hold the same opinions
and practice the same as the rational school
(so styled) of our day. Certainly not. There has
always ^{been} the greatest difference in the practice
of the prevailing school. Having no such thing
as a law of cure they have sought by the most
opposite and absurd methods to eradicate
or palliate the ills of mankind and have
been changing and shifting from one theory
to another and using the most ridiculous
preparations and heterogenous compounds

that a weak mind, guided by false reason could resort to. They are ever changing and unstable. The members of this self-styled ancient system claim the favorable opinion that they have enjoyed of many great men, men who have shed lustre upon the honorable profession of which they have been members. Far be it from us to endeavor to pluck one single stone from their monuments or rob them of anything belonging to their fame. But did not these very men feel the want of more certainty and less guessing in the system of Medicine. Great men lived before Newton, and Columbus, but did they discover the Law of universal gravitation or the existence of this glorious and important portion of our earth? Many very great and good men have been the victims of error, both in Theory, and in Practice. So what can save this system from being what we call it the school of accident.

Having examined its claims to be called the rational, and regular, school, we will now allege something against it to show that it is not founded upon that sure foundation experimental experience. And in the first place its theories are false, and uncertain.

They are false because when tried by that unerring test, experiment they are found to fail. The doctrine that diseases are caused by material foreign matters in the human body cannot be substantiated. The Theory that diseases are cured by inducing an opposing malady is just as fallacious and so on to the end of the chapter.

Then again their knowledge of drugs can only be considered an accidental knowledge. Where is the drug that has been proven before it was tried upon the sick? The few ideas of the action of a medicine which can be picked up at the bedside of the patient are about as reliable, as the flight of

birds in foretelling future events. If it were not so why has not some reliable rule been discovered for their use. One of the great lights of this self-sufficient school in speaking of the state of medicine in his day was not very far from right when he said the healing art was a science of conjecture improved by murder.

After what we have written upon the false claim of the self-styled regular school to be called rational we do not intend to write much in regard to other systems which are more or less closely allied in practice although differing in principle. In all a vast deal of error is mingled with just enough truth to make the world in doubt about the matter or else they are masked in mystery and seek to arouse the notice of mankind through the gratification of their curiosity, and hence we have secret nostrums and ambiguous compounds.

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and a confusion which no man can understand much less practice. Now then what constitute a rational system of Medicine,

We hold that as nature created a thing so we receive it. Art confers no new properties upon substances, but can only bring out those that are hidden. So with drugs we cannot create them nor can we change their properties but we can modify the effects of those powers or properties. Knowing from pure experiment that these effects are very numerous and complicated, that they affect different persons differently, that each one has an action peculiar to itself, it necessarily follows that if we wish to produce its proper effect we should take away every agent that could in anyway modify or break in upon its proper and legitimate effect or action. We should prove a thing before we adopt it. This is a maxim of prudence, and should be more generally followed.

If we follow this rule ^{we} will gradually acquire a knowledge of the properties of a number of

drugs and be prepared to continue our experiments
 still farther. Diseases are around us and we know
 the effects of these different agents upon the human
 body. Reason would teach us that if we gave those
 substances which produced symptoms opposite to those
 we found in our patient we would be doing that
 which the case demanded. But let us examine
 more carefully what we would be doing. Disease
 has seized upon certain parts affecting certain
 tissues or functions of those parts. There is no room
 for a contrary disease there and therefore the
 agent rather than be idle seizes upon the
 healthy tissues, and deranges their functions
 and we have instead of one disease two.
 Then there can be no law of cure in this case
 but a plain law of disease. That as many
 different and opposite drugs as you give just
 so many new and different diseases you
 create. We then take the opposite course
 We give a substance that has produced symp-
 toms similar to those of our patient and

Now what follows? We find the same disease
 still existing but the symptoms very much
 aggravated. Now then what is to be done under the
 premises. Contraries cure not but create new
 forms of disease and Similars aggravated the
 existing disease. There must be a law for
 the cure of disease. We try the similimum
 again in an attenuated dose and the symp-
 toms are very much relieved and a few doses
 or a few days which are often just as good
 completes the cure. We have now determin-
 ed by pure experiment, that diseases can be
 cured by giving such remedies as create
 similar symptoms in the healthy and
 why will not the law apply in all
 cases. We continue our experiments and find
 that it is invariably the same. We have now
 a law of cure, which will read in this wise
Similia Similibus Curantur
 This law founded upon and perfected by
 pure experimentation becomes more and

more certain and now let us in a few words
sum up the claims of the different systems.

In the first place there must be a true knowledge
of disease. Now the only way of arriving at such a
dissideratum is by carefully studying and properly
interpreting the symptoms. This cannot be done with
certainty therefore let us take the symptoms of the disease
as manifested externally as the disease itself. The
same way as we accept the indications of the hands
of a watch as a statement of the movements which
have occurred within. This is rational and only
held by the Homoeopathic school.

In the second place there must be a law
of cure which is applicable to all cases. None
but Homoeopaths have such a law.
and in the third place before we can have
a true picture of the properties of a drug
it must be proven upon a number of
healthy person and the symptoms recorded.
And this is the mode adopted by Homoeo-
paths, and only by them. Therefore we arrive

at this conclusion that of all systems of medicine the world has ever known or been at all acquainted with Homoeopathy proposes the best claim to be called rational or even to be called a system. And while its members continue to follow the directions of its great discoverer we believe they will be continually acquiring more power over disease and gaining the confidence of community and the world until the baseless fabric of error and uncertainty which have so long and so fatally darkened the vision of the world will crumble down either burying its defenders beneath its ruins or forcing them to flee to our more noble and more rational system for refuge. We desire the supremacy of truth over error and if the Homoeopathic system is false let it share the same fate but let Truth which is mighty eventually prevail

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